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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF DISTINGUISHED PERSONS.

MEMOIR OF MR. ROBERT RAIKES.

(From the Monthly Repository.)

AMONG those who have greatly benefitted mankind, by wisely occupying the leisure of a private station, too many are known to posterity only by the extending influence of their benevolent projects: the minute circumstances of personal history, which contribute so largely to the formation of character, were seldom related beyond their immediate connexions. Such, for all that has yet appeared, will be the case respecting that ornament of our age and country, a *moral Archimedes*, if we may be allowed the expression, the inventor of the *Sunday school*.

ROBERT RAIKES was born in 1735, in the city of Gloucester, where his father was a printer, and publisher of the *Gloucester Journal*. To his business the son succeeded, and is said to have acquired a competent property. Respecting the education of our philanthropist, or the events of his earlier years, we have no information. Yet the wise and generous occupations of his manhood may satisfy us that his youth was neither idly nor ill employed.

At a period of life when success rarely inspires moderation in the pursuits of fortune, Mr. Raikes remembered the great law of his Christian profession, that *no man liveth to himself*. He looked around for occasions of disinterested, yet not unproductive exertion, and found them near at hand. Prevention of crimes by instruction or reproof, and compassion for even justly suffering criminals, were united in his idea of

christian benevolence, which

To every want, and every woe,
To guilt itself when in distress,
The balm of pity will impart;
And all relief that bounty can bestow.

According to the *European Magazine* for 1788, (xiv. 315.)

"The first object which demanded his notice was the miserable state of the county Bridewell, within the city of Gloucester, which, being part of the county gaol, the persons committed by the magistrate out of sessions for petty offences associated, through necessity, with felons of the worst description, with little or no means of subsistence from labour; with little, if any, allowance from the county: without either meat, drink, or clothing; dependent chiefly, on the precarious charity of such as visited the prison, whether brought thither by business, curiosity or compassion.

"To relieve these miserable and forlorn wretches, and to render their situation supportable at least, Mr. Raikes employed both his pen, his influence and his property, to procure them the necessities of life: and finding that ignorance was generally the principal cause of those enormities which brought them to become objects of his notice, he determined, if possible, to procure them some moral and religious instruction. In this he succeeded, by means of bounties and encouragement given to such of the prisoners who were able to read; and these by being directed to proper books, improved both themselves and their fellow prisoners, and afforded great encouragement to persevere in the benevolent design. He then procured for them a supply of work, to preclude every excuse and temptation to idleness."

Mr. Raikes could not pursue his generous purpose towards these forlorn outcasts from civilized life, without many serious reflections. His mind must have been peculiarly affected with the sad consequences arising from the neglect, or rather the total absence, of opportunities for early instruction among the poor. He was thus prepared to indulge a second project, the success of which

he lived to see extending probably beyond his most sanguine expectations. The circumstances which led to the invention of the Sunday-school and the just and liberal views of the inventor, cannot be described so well as by himself. The following letter from Mr. Raikes was addressed to an inquirer in the North of England, and by him communicated to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, for 1804.—(v. 54, p. 410.)

“ Gloucester, Nov. 25, 1783.

SIR,

“My friend, the Mayor, has just communicated to me the letter which you have honoured him with, inquiring into the nature of the Sunday Schools. The beginning of this scheme was entirely owing to accident. Some business leading me one morning into the suburbs of the city, where the lowest of the people who are principally employed in the pin-manufactory chiefly reside, I was struck with concern at seeing a group of children, wretchedly ragged, at play in the street. I asked an inhabitant whether those children belonged to that part of the town, and lamented their misery and idleness. Ah! Sir, said the woman to whom I was speaking, could you take a view of this part of the town on a Sunday, you would be shocked indeed; for then the street is filled with multitudes of these wretches, who, released on that day from employment, spend their time in noise and riot, playing at chuck, and cursing and swearing in a manner so horrid, as to convey to any serious mind an idea of hell rather than any other place. We have a worthy clergyman, said she, curate of our parish, who has put some of them to school; but upon the sabbath, they are all given up to follow their inclinations without restraint, as their parents, totally abandoned themselves, have no idea of instilling into the minds of their children principles to which they themselves are entire strangers.

“This conversation suggested to me, that it would be at least a harmless attempt, if it were productive of no good, should some little plan be formed to check this deplorable profanation of the sabbath. I then inquired of the woman, if there were any decent well disposed women in the neighbourhood, who kept schools for teaching to read. I presently was directed to four.

To these I applied, and made an agreement with them, to receive as many children as I should send upon the Sunday, whom they were to instruct in reading, and in the church catechism. For this I engaged to pay them each a shilling for their day's employment. The women seemed pleased with the proposal. I then waited on the clergyman before mentioned, and imparted to him my plan. He was so much satisfied with the idea, that he engaged to lend his assistance, by going round to the schools on a Sunday afternoon, to examine the progress that was made, and to enforce order and decorum among such a set of little heathens.

“This, Sir, was the commencement of the plan. It is now about three years since we began, and I could wish you were here to make inquiry into the effect. A woman who lives in a lane where I had fixed a school, told me some time ago, that the place was quite a heaven upon Sundays, compared to what it used to be. The numbers who have learned to read and say their catechism are so great that I am astonished at it. Upon the Sunday afternoon, the mistresses take their scholars to church, a place into which neither they nor their ancestors ever entered, with a view to the glory of God. But what is yet more extraordinary, within this month, these little ragamuffins have in great numbers taken it into their heads so frequent the early morning prayers, which are held every morning at the cathedral at seven o'clock. I believe there were near fifty this morning. They assemble at the house of one of the mistresses, and walk before her to church, two and two, in as much order as a company of soldiers. I am generally at church, and after service they all come round me to make their bow: and if any animosities have arisen, to make their complaint. The great principle I inculcate, is, to be kind and good-natured to each other, not to provoke one another; to be dutiful to their parents; not to offend God by cursing and swearing; and such little plain precepts as all may comprehend. As my profession is that of a printer, I have printed a little book which I give amongst them, and some friends of mine, subscribers to the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, sometimes make me a present of a parcel of Bibles, Testaments, &c. which I distribute as rewards to the deserving. The success that has attended this scheme, has induced one or two of my friends to adopt the plan, and set up

Sunday-schools in other parts of the city, and now a whole parish has taken up the object; so that I flatter myself in time the good effects will appear so conspicuous as to become generally adopted. The number of children at present thus engaged on the Sabbath, are between two and three hundred, and they are increasing every week, as the benefit is universally seen. I have endeavoured to engage the clergy of my acquaintance that reside in their parishes. One has entered into the scheme with great fervour; and it was in order to excite others to follow the example, that I inserted in my paper the paragraph which I suppose you saw copied into the London papers. I cannot express to you the pleasure I often receive in discovering genius and innate good dispositions, among this little multitude. It is botanizing in human nature. I have often, too, the satisfaction of receiving thanks from parents, for the reformation they perceive in their children. Often I have given them kind admonitions, which I always do in the mildest and gentlest manner. The going among them, doing them little kindnesses, distributing trifling rewards, and ingratiating myself with them, I hear, have given me an ascendancy, greater than I ever could have imagined; for I am told by their mistresses that they are very much afraid of my displeasure. If you ever pass through Gloucester, I shall be happy to pay my respects to you, and to show you the effects of this effort at civilization. If the glory of God be promoted in any, even the smallest degree, society must reap some benefit. If good seed be sown in the mind, at an early period of human life, though it shows itself not again for many years, it may please God, at some future period, to cause it to spring up, and to bring forth a plenteous harvest.

"With regard to the rules adopted, I only require that they come to the school on Sunday as clean as possible. Many were at first deterred because they wanted decent clothing, but I could not undertake to supply this defect. I argue, therefore, if you can loiter about without shoes, and in a ragged coat, you may as well come to school, and learn what may tend to your good in that garb. I reject none on that footing. All that I require, are clean hands, clean face, and the hair combed; if you have no clean shirt, come in that which you have on. The want of decent apparel, at first, kept great numbers at a distance, but they now begin to grow

wiser, and all are pressing to learn. I have had the good luck to procure places for some that were deserving, which has been of great use. You will understand that these children are from six years old to 12 or 14. Boys and girls above this age, who have been totally undisciplined, are generally too refractory for this government. A reformation in society seems to me only practicable by establishing notices of duty, and practical habits of order and decorum at an early stage. But whether am I running? I am ashamed to see how much I have trespassed on your patience; but I thought the most complete idea of Sunday Schools, was to be conveyed to you by telling what first suggested the thought. The same sentiments would have arisen in your mind had they happened to have been called forth, as they were suggested to me.

"I have no doubt that you will find great improvement to be made on this plan. The minds of men have taken great hold on that prejudice, that we are to do nothing on the Sabbath-day, which may be deemed labour, and therefore we are to be excused from all application of mind as well as body. The rooting out this prejudice is the point I aim at as my favourite object. Our Saviour takes particular pains to manifest that whatever tended to promote the health and happiness of our fellow creatures, were sacrifices peculiarly acceptable on that day.

"I do not think I have written so long a letter for some years. But you will excuse me, my heart is warm in the cause. I think this is the kind of reformation most requisite in this kingdom. Let our patriots employ themselves in rescuing their countrymen from that despotism, which tyrannical passions and vicious inclinations exercise over them, and they will find that true liberty and national welfare are more essentially promoted, than by any reform in parliament.

"As often as I have attempted to conclude, some new idea has arisen. This is strange, as I am writing to a person whom I never have, and perhaps never may see; but I have felt that we think alike. I shall therefore only add my ardent wishes, that your views of promoting the happiness of society may be attended with every possible success, conscious that your own internal enjoyment will thereby be considerably advanced.

"I have the honour to be, Sir, yours, &c.
R. RAIKES."

Mr. Raikes had very soon occasion to answer another inquiry "from Bradford, in Yorkshire." His letter, which is dated, "Gloucester, June 5, 1784," will be found in the *New Annual Register* for 1785, (212) and agrees, in substance, with the foregoing. Yet the following passages may serve to complete the interesting information, upon the subject of the Sunday School, the last which we can receive from the inventor himself.

"I went round to the parents to remonstrate with them on the melancholy consequences that must ensue from so fatal a neglect of their children's morals. They alleged, that their poverty rendered them incapable of cleaning and clothing their children fit to appear either at school or at church; but this objection was obviated by a remark, that if they were clad in a garb fit to appear in the streets, I should not think it improper for a school calculated to admit the poorest and most neglected. Many children began to show talents for learning, and a desire to be taught. Little rewards were distributed among the most diligent; this excited an emulation. Certain boys who are distinguished by their decent behaviour, are appointed to superintend the conduct of the rest, and make report of those that swear, call names, or interrupt the comfort of the other boys in their neighbourhood. When quarrels have arisen, the aggressor is compelled to ask pardon, and the offender is enjoined to forgive. The happiness that must arise to all, from a kind, good-natured behaviour, is often inculcated.

"This mode of treatment has produced a wonderful change in the manners of these little savages. I cannot give a more striking instance than I received the other day from Mr. Church, a considerable manufacturer of hemp and flax, who employs great numbers of these children. I asked him whether he perceived any alteration in the poor children he employed.—'Sir,' says he, 'the change could not have been more extraordinary in my opinion, had they been transformed from the shape of wolves and tygers to that of men. In temper, disposition, and manners, they could hardly be said to differ from the brute creation. But since the establishment of

Sunday-schools, they have seemed anxious to show that they are not the ignorant, illiterate creatures they were before. In short, I never conceived that a reformation so singular could have been effected among the set of untutored beings I employed.'"

It appears, from the first letter of Mr. Raikes, that the Sunday School originated in 1780. For three years the schools gradually extended in his neighbourhood, to which they appear then to have been confined, and where several clergymen, besides the curate mentioned by Mr. Raikes, very laudably contributed to the success of the scheme, by their personal attentions. The report of that success, in and about Gloucester, could not fail to draw attention from other parts of England. In 1784, the plan was adopted in Yorkshire by several manufacturing towns. In Leeds, 1800 children were speedily collected.

In 1785, was established in London, a "Society for the support and encouragement of Sunday Schools," by donations of suitable books, or rendering them of easy purchase, also by remunerating teachers in districts too poor to reward them. This institution was zealously supported by members of the established church, and Nonconformists of every denomination. Sunday Schools were opened under the patronage of the Society, in the environs of London, at the close of this year, (1785), at Kennington, superintended by the Rev. Mr. Swaine; and at Stoke Newington, by Mr. Hoare, (*G. Mag.* 55, 1036); the first-named gentleman a clergyman of the Church of England, the other one of the society of Quakers.

Clergymen of rank now did themselves honour by advocating this cause. Among these, the Rev. Dr. Kaye, Dean of Lincoln, was distinguished, by a "Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry

of Nottingham." This charge entered so justly into the design and tendency of the institution, that we make no apology for the following quotation.

"The divine goodness seems to have pointed out to the present age a measure so peculiarly comprehensive in the advantages which it holds out to society, that it appears formed to counteract the evil propensities of these days, and to prevent them from being injurious to succeeding generations; which folds, my brethren, within its benevolent arms, every sect of christianity, every description of mankind. The measure which appears to me to possess this invaluable antidote to the poisonous manners of this depraved age, is the establishment of Sunday Schools. The power and efficacy of these institutions, reach to such extent of situation and of numbers, as no other mode of improvement can possibly equal. Having anxiously watched their infancy, and attended to their progress, I have thought their principles the most unequivocal, and their influence the most extensive, that can be employed in the cause of general reformation. Nor will the benefit be confined to the children;—it will importantly affect the manners of the families, and even of the neighbourhood to which they belong.

"In the larger towns, the obligation of these establishments is more strongly marked; but I am persuaded that there are few parishes where there will not be found children to be benefited by these institutions. And in manufacturing establishments, they who profit by the labour of such poor children, will, we trust, universally recompense them with this humane return; since the children they employ on the days of labour are thereby deprived of the advantage of every other improvement. This object, my reverend brethren, I own to you, is nearest my heart, in my present communication with you. You cannot employ your influence in more humanity to individuals, and more patriotism to your country, than by giving it every assistance and protection in your power."

G. Mag. 1786, vol. lvi. 257.

At the same time, the Rev. Mr. Hearne, one of the Rectors of Canterbury, exerted himself zealously

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among the indigent population of that place. A very gratifying account of his success was given by him in a letter addressed to the Dean of Canterbury, Dr. Horne, afterwards Bishop of Norwich, who interested himself in this cause. The letter is preserved in the Gentleman's Magazine for 1786 (V. 56, p. 257), and also given in the *Selections* from that Magazine, just published, (V. iii. 115), and is well worthy of perusal. Mr. H. candidly states his constant use of Dr. Watt's Songs in the Schools, and the countenance he received from a "Dissenter," and a "Quaker." About this time, it was estimated that no less than 250,000 children, in different parts of England, were under instruction by Sunday Schools.

The late Bishop Porteus, then Bishop of Chester, recommended the formation of Sunday Schools in his extensive diocese. This prelate had early conceived a very favourable opinion of the plan, as we are informed in his life, just published, and in several instances privately encouraged it.

"But, as an act of prudence, he determined not to give it the sanction of his public approbation, 'till,' as he observes, 'time and experience, and more accurate inquiry, had enabled him to form a more decided judgment of its real value, and its probable effects.' When, however, repeated information from various quarters, and particularly from some of the largest manufacturing towns in his diocese, had convinced him that such institutions, wherever the experiments had been fairly tried, had produced, and could not fail to produce, if discreetly regulated, essential benefit, he no longer hesitated in promoting them generally throughout his diocese. With this view, as the wisest and most effectual mode of giving publicity to his sentiments, he addressed to his clergy a very excellent letter, containing, in a short compass, a plain, temperate, and judicious exposition of the advantages of Sunday

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Schools, and of the rules by which they should be conducted."

Life of Bishop Porteus, p. 93.

This patronage of Sunday Schools, by the late Bishop of London, appears much more in character, than the caution from which he at first withheld his *public* support. Considering his opinion of the scheme, and that it originated with a man after his own heart, in church matters, it is wonderful, that while thousands were perishing "for lack of knowledge," he could hesitate to employ any influence which his public station, afforded to urge Clergy and Laity thus to do good on the Sabbath-day. The trite adage, *bis dat qui cito dat*, is here peculiarly applicable.

On this occasion, the late Mr. Thomas Christie should not be forgotten. That gentleman, during the course of a liberal education in Scotland, where he once designed the medical profession, had composed Essays on a variety of subjects. A volume of these he published in 1789, under the title of "Miscellanies; Philosophical, Medical, and Moral." The 3d consists of "Hints respecting the state and education of the people." Having complained that "too great eagerness in inferior manufacturers, obstructs the formation of human minds, the greatest of all manufactures," he proposes that "a part, at least, of the Sunday may be usefully employed in instructing those who will not go to church, and indeed cannot be expected to go, because they can neither read, write nor understand." He adds,

"Since these remarks were first written, a grand and extensive plan has been set on foot in England, by Mr. Raikes, of Gloucester, for the education of the common people. It will easily be understood that I allude to the institution of Sunday Schools. It is with infinite satisfaction, that I find so many eminent and excellent persons have now engaged in promoting

these, and that the good effects flowing from them are already beyond all expectation. Excellent Mr. Raikes! May thy benevolent example be universally followed! Thou hast raised the depressed human mind, and given light to those who sat in darkness. The blessing of them that were ready to perish shall come upon thee; and the people who were destroyed for lack of knowledge shall celebrate thy name."

P. 214.

Mr. Christie adds, that "enlightened politicians throughout Europe, are generally beginning to adopt the same sentiments." He mentions a work which he had lately met with, entitled, *Vues patriotiques sur l'éducation du peuple; à Lyon, 1783*, 12mo. The following is a translation, by Mr. Christie, of a passage of that work, in answer to Rousseau's objection to the education of the poor. It is curious, as a specimen of a publication, for the people in France, so early as 1783, and too closely connected with our subject, for its insertion to require an apology.

"How, without some instruction, shall they learn to conform themselves to their situation, to lessen the number of its difficulties by industry, to mitigate them by resignation, or sometimes to rise above that unfortunate condition into which the chance of their birth has thrown them? I teach the rich, say you, to make a proper use of their riches; but what can I teach the poor man? Much;—not to make a bad use of his poverty; not to make it a pretence for giving himself up to beggary and idleness; or for making free with the fortune of others: lastly, to pay his country that tribute with his strength, which another pays with his gold. Do not then consider this as the least useful task. Whether ill or well educated, the rich can always lay out their money; and it is of little consequence to society, whether the tavern-keeper or jeweller is the means of circulating it. But is it also indifferent in what manner the poor man employs his hands? Is it the same thing to society, whether he sprinkles the furrows of the plains with the sweat of his brow, or drenches the high-ways with the blood of the traveller? To speak with propriety,

it is the poor man, it is the common people who have most need of education."

P. 216.

This is necessarily rather a Memoir of Sunday Schools, than of their inventor. These now enjoyed such general countenance, that it would be useless to seek farther after their early patrons. If any great men waited, even longer than Bishop Porteus, who, it appears, was satisfied as a *man*, while he hesitated as a *Bishop*, they reserved to themselves only the very easy task to

Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale.

It will be recollected that Mr. Raikes, in his letter, has, in rather disparaging terms, spoken of "patriots," and "a reform in Parliament," a question then much agitated, and which William Pitt, "the great statesman, now no more," had not yet found it quite convenient to abandon, though he was preparing to *kick down the ladder* by which he ascended. Mr. Raikes probably had not turned his attention to political subjects, or he would have perceived how he was doing more than any other individual to perfect the design of the "Patriots." For, by rescuing his "countrymen" from the "despotism of tyrannical passions, and vicious inclinations," he was gradually removing the only objection which could be endured, under a free and equal government, against a representation the most extensive. Nor, in the mean time, could he have been so easily satisfied, without attempting every practicable "Reform in Parliament," had he observed in how many instances, under the present representative system, election must unavoidably become

....."A market vile
Of slaves self-barter'd."

The "patriots," as they are sometimes called in derision, may challenge a comparison with their warm-

est opponents, on the ground of attention to every useful project which has done honour to the age. While they have pursued *political* improvements, as they ought to have done, they have not left the others undone. It is remarkable, that after the plan of Mr. Raikes had been making for fourteen years a generally applauded progress, an alarm was excited against it, chiefly on account of its encouragement by political reformers, to whose views, misrepresented by ignorance or interest, it was supposed peculiarly favourable.

In the Gentleman's Magazine for 1797, (V. 67, p. 819), appeared a writer with the signature of Eusebius, and understood to be a clergyman. His letter displays prejudices unworthy of a liberal scholar. He decides that "a man of no literature will seldom attempt to form insurrections, or plan an idle scheme for the reformation of the state." He therefore concludes, that "the Sunday-school is in reality productive of no valuable advantage," and "ought to be exploded as the vain and chimerical invention of a visionary projector." Eusebius was aided (V. 68, p. 31) by one who signed himself, "A Friend to the Established Church, and a well-wisher to all mankind; though an enemy to every thing that looks like mischief or rebellion." This writer would substitute *Saturday* for Sunday-schools, that the "employment on the Sabbath" may be "not of a *worldly*, but entirely of a *religious* nature." If "the Clergy are allowed and requested to superintend and direct, it is hoped that the minds of children will not be poisoned, as they have been sometimes, with tracts published for the use of Sunday-schools.

The Dean of Lincoln, whom we quoted, had, in another part of his *Charge*, supposed the race of objectors to the intellectual and moral

culture of the poor, almost extinct. They however survived in these writers, who were ably, though easily, answered, especially by Clericus (V. 68, p. 32), who charges such objections "with being instrumental in taking from the poor that key of knowledge, which was given to them by Christ himself, before it was bestowed on the rich."

We know of no later published opposition to the plan of Mr. Raikes, who lived to see his benevolent purposes advanced, to an incalculable, extent, by the facilities lately afforded to the education of the poor. The report of the Sunday-school society, in April last, is worthy of being here preserved, premising that it can only display a partial and perhaps not the most considerable view of the progress of Sunday-schools.

"Since the commencement of this Institution, 285,672 Spelling books, 62,166 Testaments, and 7,714 Bibles, have been distributed to 3,348 schools, containing upwards of 270,000 scholars. Besides which, the sum of £4,176, Os. 5d. has been paid to teachers, in places where they could not be otherwise obtained."

Prot. Dis. Almanack, 1811, p. 22.

Mr. Raikes appears to have been highly favoured in the circumstances of his death, which happened, April 5th, 1811, in his native city of Gloucester, without any previous indisposition, and in his 76th year. Thus he came to his grave in a full age, and might, surely, have solaced his life's decline, with the promise of his great Exemplar—"Blessed art thou, for these cannot recompense thee, but

thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

Should the period ever arrive when, as the *Spectator* (No. 610) conjectured of superior beings, mankind shall esteem "the evening walk of a wise man more illustrious than the march of a general at the head of a hundred thousand men," the name of Robert Raikes cannot fail to receive public honours. But nations are "slowly wise, and meanly just." We expend our marble on war-ministers, and their military *machines*, "worthies," according to the poet,

Who count it glorious to subdue
By conquest far and wide, to over-run
Large countries, and in fields great battles
win,

Great cities by assault ;

while we have little to bestow on
renown acquired,

Without ambition, war, or violence,
By deeds of peace, by wisdom eminent.

Yet the name of Robert Raikes will not be soon forgotten among those who have diffused light over the dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty. Nor, comparing what he found with what he left, as to provisions for the education of the people, will it be deemed extravagant if we apply to the inventor of the Sunday School, the line inscribed, in the Cathedral of the Metropolis, to the memory of its great architect,

*Si monumentum queris, circumspice.**

* "If you would see his monument, look around."

DETACHED ANECDOTES.

SERAPIS, SERAPEUMS.

THE superstition of the Egyptians has often been ridiculed;

but their mythology has seldom, if ever, been contemplated with a favourable eye. The Jupiter of the